

## **GUIDELINES *for* FY 2007**

### **Small Scale Farmers in South Carolina**

#### **PURPOSE**

There is an ongoing national and state concern over the low participation of small scale farmers in the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Farm Bill Programs.

The purpose of this category is to improve technical service and program participation in all USDA programs through improved outreach efforts to Small Scale and Limited Resource Farmers. The target audience is defined as small scale farmers who have historically not participated in nor ever ranked high enough to be selected for a contract. We must be innovative in allowing small farmers to select practices that are best suited for their particular operations while at the same time low enough in cost to be effective and practical for small farms to implement and maintain.

In developing and implementing this outreach initiative in South Carolina, NRCS technical practices and programs will help break through potential barriers to participation in USDA programs by small farmers.

**Follow guidelines identified under EQIP, section 515 of Conservation Programs Manual, unless specifically identified in the following guidance.**

- All Small Scale Farmer funds will be used to help **small farmers with a state average of 197 acres or less per operation**; (A 5% variance will be allowed). Acres can be any combination of cropland and/or grassland, wooded areas.
- Applicants must not have participated in NRCS programs for the past 10 years with the exception of the 2005 Small Farmer Initiative.
- The income limit for eligibility will be \$63,000 adjusted gross family income (5% variance allowed) based on last 2 years of income tax returns. The producer will be allowed to self-certify.
- **To be eligible, at least 10 percent of the cropland acres must be planted to alternative crops.** (Note: Alternative crops are not traditional crops such as cotton, soybeans, rice, grain sorghum, field corn, wheat, or similar crops grown on large acreage and produced for off-farm scales). For a list of alternative crops, go to [http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/AFSIC\\_pubs/altlist](http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/AFSIC_pubs/altlist).
- **Applicants with pastureland** must be willing to follow a prescribed grazing plan.
- **Contracts will be limited to \$25,000 per operation. Cost share rates will be up to 75 percent for all practices, based on state average cost list.**
- **All problematic application(s) and contract(s) items will be sent for review by Small Farmers Liaison along with the field staff's proposed action to ensure consistency with program delivery across the state.**
- **Existing 2005 SFI contract holders will be allowed to develop a second contract that will not exceed \$25,000 Per Operations, the new contract must address separate practices or concerns.**

- All participants must be registered in the Service Center Information Management System (SCIMS) or grant permission to be registered in SCIMS.
- **2007 SFI Average State Cost will be used when developing contracts.**
  - **Nutrient, pest management, and record keeping will be required** for all conservation plans. There will be an incentive payment of \$500/year for three years of the contract period. This is a maximum value of \$1500.
  - All contract participants are encouraged to attend and provide documentation that a recent farm record management training class has been completed. Please utilize Clemson Extension to provide this type of training session.
  - **Existing field office technical standards are available to accomplish conservation planning for small scale farms.**
  - **As needed**, NRCS will develop and apply innovative and cost effective technical standards according to policy and place in the field office technical guide.
  - General practice planning guide lines:
    1. **Fence** – Practice Code 382 includes fencing, that meets NRCS standards and as provided under the EQIP guidelines.
    2. **Irrigation Conversion** – Practice Code 441 – Improved Micro Irrigation Systems
      - A. Cost share limits are same as general EQIP
      - B. Improved Micro Irrigation - \$1500/acre
    3. **Irrigation Water Management Micro** – Practice Code 449 – This is an incentive payment for micro irrigation systems which is used for both micro and sprinkler. There are two components on cost list.
      - A. Irrigation Water Management – Micro - \$600/acre
      - B. Management Payments may be received only three times. The incentive payments for this practice is associated with purchase and installation of plastic mulch, drip tape, the use of devices such as the tensiometer for conserving and applying adequate water to the crops grown when the drip irrigation system is in operation.
    4. Irrigation payments are limited to \$15,000 per operation.
    5. If producer wants to **establish** NEW silvopasture, use 612 and 512 components for cost share.
    6. Water Wells will be primarily recommended for livestock watering needs.

It is very important that we **do not allow vendor payments and the cash flow of small farmers** to become a barrier to applying practices to the land. **NRCS may assist participants in completing and using the CC-36 Form, Assignment of Payment, to work with small farmers in paying for conservation work and services**

**provided under the Small Scale Farmer contracts.** This tool has been used in the past and is still being used by the Farm Service Agency.

Ranking to be done by: December 15, 2006

Funding determination will be made: January 12, 2007

Conservation Plans and contracts will be signed and written by: March 1, 2007

The sign-up period in South Carolina will run the same as the General EQIP signup ending 10/01/2006.

**FY 2007  
SMALL SCALE FARMER  
SOUTH CAROLINA****APPLICANT  
SELF-CERTIFICATION**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, do hereby certify that I meet the  
(Print Applicant's Name)

eligibility requirements of the South Carolina Small Scale Farmer. These requirements are the same as those for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), (section 515 of Conservation Program Manual) and those contained in the “FY 2007 Guidelines for Small Scale Farmer of South Carolina.”

These requirements include, but are not limited to, the following items of emphasis:

- 1.) My entire farming operation consists of 197 acres or less (*a 5% variance is allowed*)
- 2.) My annual adjusted gross family income is \$63,000 or less based on the last 2 years income tax returns (*a 5% variance is allowed*).
- 3.) I have not participated in any Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) programs for the past 10 years with the exception of a 2005 Small Farmer Initiative (SFI) contract.

I further understand and agree to provide any needed documentation as may be requested by a NRCS employee to verify my eligibility. Failure to provide the requested documentation may result in the cancellation of the application and/or contract.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature of Applicant*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

Updated: May 23, 2006